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Aces Up! The Thrilling Fact Stories of U.S. War Flyers

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Knox , J. (1918). *Aces Up! The Thrilling Fact Stories of U.S. War Flyers.* .

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ACES UP!

The Thrilling
Fact Stories of
U.S. War Flyers.

Taken From the Hitherto Secret Government Archives of the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany and the Word-of-Mouth Stories of Surviving War Eagles.

BY JOHN KNOX
PART 2
The Lafayette Escadrille
CHAPTER SIXTEEN
MAJOR RAOUL LUFBERY

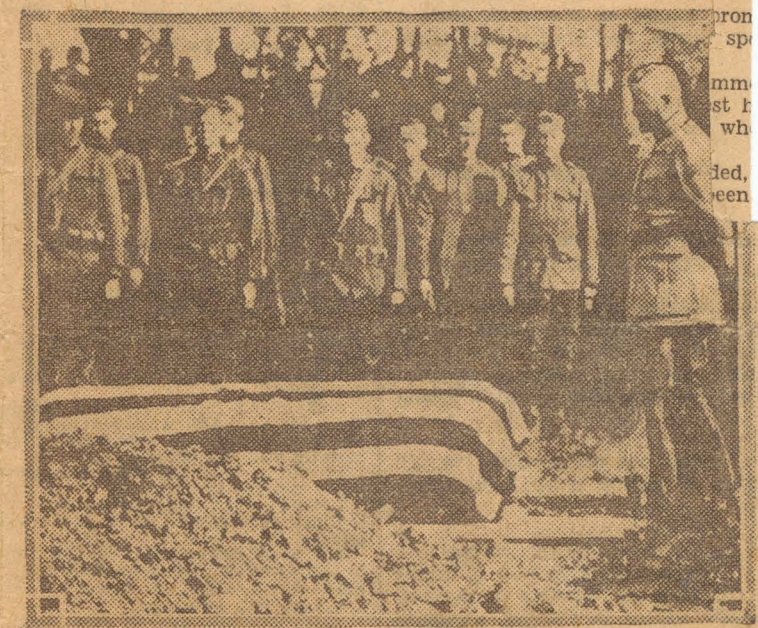
LUFBERY was the White Knight of the Escadrille Lafayette. Born in France of a French mother and an American father, Gervais Raoul Lufbery was one of history's rare spirits. Modest, courageous and determined, he sought the full savor of life from his early boyhood. At nineteen he set forth to see the world. For three years he had worked in a factory at Blois, sending his earnings to America to help his father establish himself in Wallingford, Connecticut.

Working his way, young Lufbery traveled through Algiers, Tunis, Egypt, Turkey, the Balkan states and Germany, sailing from Hamburg for the United States. After three years he went to Wallingford to see his father, only to discover that the latter had sailed for Europe the day before. Father and son were never to meet again.

Lufbery went from Wallingford to Cuba and then to New Orleans and San Francisco, where he enlisted in the United States army, serving for two years in the Philippines. Mustered out, he went on to Japan and China and then to India.

At Calcutta he offered himself as a mechanic to the French aviator, Marc Pourpe, waving aside his ignorance of aeronautics with the statement that he would learn aeronautics as Pourpe had—by experience.

The two wandering aeronauts had many adventures in the orient. At one place in China, which was famous for its kite building, the local kite-flyers felt that their reputation was at stake, so they built an exact duplicate of Pourpe's Bleriot—identical in every particular except that it had no engine. To substitute for the song of the foreign devil's engine, the Chinese attached a box of bees who buzzed merrily, but



The funeral of Major Raoul Lufbery near Toul, France, May 19, 1918. The services for this distinguished flyer were attended by notable officials. At the foot of the casket stands General Clarence Edwards.

clans admitted it was ready and without another word Lufbery jumped into the seat and immediately took off. About five minutes after leaving the ground he had reached 2,000 feet and was in range of the German six miles away. The first attack was witnessed by all our watchers. Lufbery fired several short bursts, then swerved away and appeared to busy himself with his gun, which seemed to have jammed. Another circle over their heads and he had cleared the jam. Again he attacked from the rear, when suddenly his machine was seen to burst into flames. He passed the German and for three or four seconds pro-

thought that Lufbery, seeing a slight chance, had jumped in the hope of falling into the stream."

Lufbery's body bore only one wound—a bullet mark on his thumb.

The passing of Lufbery was the last chapter in the romantic era of the story of the Escadrille Lafayette. His funeral was attended by General Gerard, commander of the Sixth French army, with his entire staff; by General Edwards, his old commander in the Philippines; by General Hunter Liggett, Colonel William Mitchell and hundreds of French and American officers of all ranks.

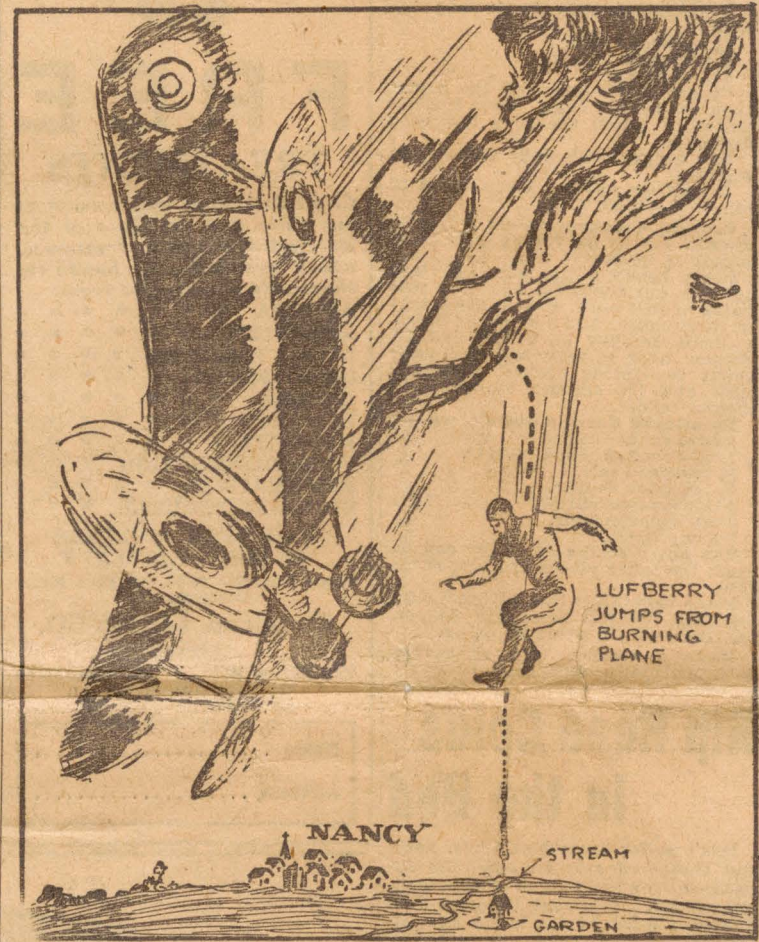
Lieutenant Kenneth Culbert wrote of the funeral:

"In all my life I have never heard 'taps' blown so beautifully as on that afternoon. Even some of the officers joined the women there in quietly dabbing at their eyes with white handkerchiefs. Truly France and America had assembled to pay a last tribute to one of their bravest soldiers. My only prayer is that somehow, by some means, I may do as much as he for my country before I go west—if in that direction I am to travel."

Lieutenant Culbert was killed in combat the next day.

Here we leave the heroes of the Lafayette Escadrille to history. Later we shall have more to say of the great monument to their memory, which is nearing completion in the beautiful Park of St. Cloud, near Paris. We have told too little of their story, but perhaps enough to make clear their labors as the First American Expeditionary Force—a little band of unselfish men who gave their lives for an ideal and opened the gate through which Pershing's two million were to pour to end the war.

Tomorrow — Read the thrilling story of the first air battle in American waters—the only battle of the World war fought in sight of American shores—in which the men at home showed themselves of the same caliber as those who went to France.



could not get the creation of bamboo and gilt paper off the ground. It flew well at the end of a string, but fell short of the performance of the Bleriot in independent flight.

War found them both in France and both entered the service, as has been told in earlier chapters of this story. The tale of many of Lufbery's victories has already been told. He continued to add to his score until he was credited officially with eighteen, with at least twenty more not so verified but undoubtedly won by him.

When he was transferred to the United States army with the rank of Major, he passed the examination of a board of flying officers. His file in the war department at Washington shows this entry in the report of the board:

"The most expert pilot of the Americans at the front and considered by some French officers to be the best pilot in France. He has brought down officially twelve machines, unofficially twenty-four. Very quiet, self-controlled and self-respecting, very serious and a man whose presence inspires confidence. Capable of commanding men and actually commanding in patrol work."

His career in the American army was brief. After being shifted several times from one command to another during the confusion of the early months of 1918, he resumed his solitary patrols over the German lines.

Lufbery's One Fear.

Of undoubted courage, he had one fear—that of being burned to death in a flaming airplane. He always said that if his plane caught fire in the air, he would jump to his death rather than burn.

On May 19, 1918, which by a curious coincidence was the twenty-first birthday of Frank Luke, Lufbery made his last flight. At that time he was with the 94th U. S. Aero squadron, which was hampered by the lack of machine guns and flying equipment. We will let Captain Edward V. Rickenbacker, later American Ace of Aces, tell the story of that flight.

"It was about 10 o'clock," writes Captain Rickenbacker, "when the anti-aircraft guns on the top of Mont Mihiel began shooting at a very high altitude. A warning came to us immediately that a German photographic plane was coming our way and was at that moment almost directly over our field. The batteries ceased firing and seemed to have scored a hit, for the German machine began a long vril, spinning faster and faster as it neared the ground. Just as the onlookers were sure that it was about to crash, it straightened out and turned back toward the German lines.

Lufbery Down in Flames

Lufbery's own machine was out of commission, but another Nieuport was standing on the field, apparently ready for use. The mechan-

ceeded on a straight course. Then he jumped.

His body fell into the flower garden of a peasant woman's house in a little town just north of Nancy. There was a small stream about one hundred yards distant and it was